

**the
Leicestershire
Historian
1994**



The Leicestershire Historian, which is published annually, is the magazine of the Leicestershire Local History Council and is distributed free to members. The Council exists to bring local history to the doorstep of all interested people in Leicester and Leicestershire, to provide opportunities for them to meet from time to time, to act as a coordinating body between the various county history societies, to encourage and support local history exhibitions and generally to promote the advancement of local history studies.

In particular the Council aims to provide a service to all the local history societies and groups throughout the county, by keeping in touch with them and offering advice. All members receive a Newsletter, which includes a diary of events, reports on activities and publicity for groups.

One-day Conferences of seminars on a particular topic are held in the spring and autumn, to which members (both individuals and groups) are invited, to meet and compare notes about their activities. An up-dated list of groups, many of them affiliated as members of the Council, is published in the magazine. There are summer outings and the AGM is held in May, kindly hosted by one of the affiliated groups.

The different categories of membership and the subscriptions are set out below. If you or your group wish to become a member, please contact the Secretary, who will be pleased to supply further information about membership and future activities.

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| GROUP, Organization | £6.50 |
| DOUBLE, Husband and Wife | £6.50 |
| INDIVIDUAL | £5.00 |
| DOUBLE, Senior Citizens | £5.00 |
| SINGLE, Senior Citizen, Student | £4.00 |

THE LEICESTERSHIRE HISTORIAN

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Colonel Sir Andrew Martin

The Leicestershire Local History Council lost one of its greatest supporters with the passing of Colonel Sir Andrew Martin. He was instrumental in encouraging the Leicestershire Rural Community Council in 1966, when the Local History Council came into being. He was pleased to be our first Chairman until the Council was up and running. He then handed over the chairmanship and became one of our most supportive Vice-Presidents. On the death of Professor Hoskins in 1992 he was the only person to take over as President and this he did willingly. During his time as Lord Lieutenant he had many demands on his time but he regularly attended Local History Council meetings, to which he brought much helpful advice and expertise. We were very fortunate to have so much encouragement.

Mrs Betty Pocklington

It was with sadness that we learnt during the summer of the passing of Betty Pocklington, the wife of our Vice Chairman, following a few months of debilitating illness and frailty. Frank and Betty were early members of the Leicestershire Local History Council and she regularly accompanied him to our functions, always helpful and expressing a kind and friendly manner to those she met. Those of us who came in contact with her more often enjoyed her sense of humour, which rose above what were sometimes irksome tasks; and there was always a warm welcome. Mention must be made of the part she played, together with Frank, in the printing of *The Leicesteshire Historian* at their firm, Duplotype (Offset) Limited.

Mr W Birrell

Towards the end of the year Bill Birrell, another of our long time members, died following a short but serious illness. He served on the Executive Committee for several years, where he carried out the duties of Minutes Secretary with great care and thoughtfulness. His quiet manner and gentle approach often disguised some very pertinent and helpful points, which defused the occasional involved discussions. He and his wife Enid regularly attended Leicestershire Local History Council meetings and outings, in spite of many demands on their time.

Mrs J M Mason

EDITORIAL

The romantic view of Ashby-de-la-Zouch castle from the north on our cover is taken from the lithograph by Fanny Palmer published in 1842-3. In our opening article Mr Bennett traces the sad course of the career of this artist and her family in her home town of Leicester and subsequently in New York. Although she failed in business, her work at least remains well known in America.

Reminiscences are an old person's current stock-in-trade for conversation. George Thorpe learnt at school to express himself vividly on paper and retains a clear memory of his early years in Leicester. Over the years he has offered us various articles he has written on individual topics in his long life. His account of his family's holidays, 'Tilton on the Hill in the Early 1900s', was published in our Vol 3 No 8 in 1990. This year he is 95 years old. Adam Goodwin has drawn together for us some of these writings so as to form an account of his early years in North Evington.

Our final article is a novel contribution to history and makes excellent use of the kind of material which ten years ago might never have been considered worth preserving in a museum. Steph Mastoris, the Curator of Harborough Museum, has been enthusiastic about building up a collection to illustrate the work of the local entertainer Ernest Elliott. He has passed on his enthusiasm to Carla Herbert who, with his help, has written for us a fascinating account of this man's double career.

A new departure in this issue is the large number of people who have written reviews for our Book Reviews section. Thanks are due to Christine Taggart, the Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service representative on the Leicestershire Local History Council, for securing the reviews by her colleagues.

One theme to be commemorated in various ways next year is the English Civil War. We will welcome any relevant articles and other contributions for the next issue of *The Leicestershire Historian*.

FANNY PALMER, LEICESTER'S TRANSATLANTIC ARTIST

J D Bennett

Currier & Ives were the most famous print-makers in nineteenth-century America. Between 1857 and 1907, from their premises in New York, the firm issued more than seven hundred coloured lithographs of almost every aspect of contemporary American life. They employed many artists, including several English people; one of the most prolific and versatile was Leicester-born Fanny Palmer.¹

I had for some time been aware of the artist and her now very rare set of lithographs, *Sketches in Leicestershire*, published in 1842-3; but it was only recently that I realized that she went on to have a long and successful artistic career in the United States, where she is now regarded as one of the most important lithographers of her era.

Frances (Fanny) Flora Palmer was born in Leicester on the 26th of June 1812, the daughter of Robert and Elizabeth Bond. Her father was a solicitor who appears in local directories between 1794 and 1835, at addresses in the Market Place, Market Street and Horsefair Street. She was the third of six children born between 1809 and 1821. Her sister Maria, born in 1815, and her brother Robert, born in 1821, both of whom shared her artistic interests, were to play an important part in her life.

Fanny and Maria attended Mary Linwood's school in Belgrave Gate, where drawing was part of the curriculum, along with music, grammar, needlework and literature. It is not known whether she received any further artistic training; one does wonder if she was ever a pupil of John Flower, by then well established as a local drawing master, also a lithographer, and a former protégé of Mary Lindwood. His *Views of Ancient Buildings in the Town and County of Leicester*, published in 1826, would have been familiar to Fanny; certainly some of his subjects are ones she herself was to include in the *Sketches*.²

On the 13th of July 1832 at Stoke Newington parish Church in Middlesex, Frances Flora Bond was married to Edmund Seymour Palmer, who is described as 'a gentleman'. A daughter, Frances, was born in 1833 and a son, Edmund, in 1835.

By the time her father died in 1839, leaving no money at all, Fanny was already advertising her drawing school at her house in Nelson Street, off London Road. Two years later the Palmers had moved to Princess Street



Ulvescroft Priory

(now Princess Road), together with Fanny's brother and sister, Robert and Maria Bond, and set up in business as lithographic printers: 'every description of fancy lithographic printing executed in the highest Parisian and London taste'.

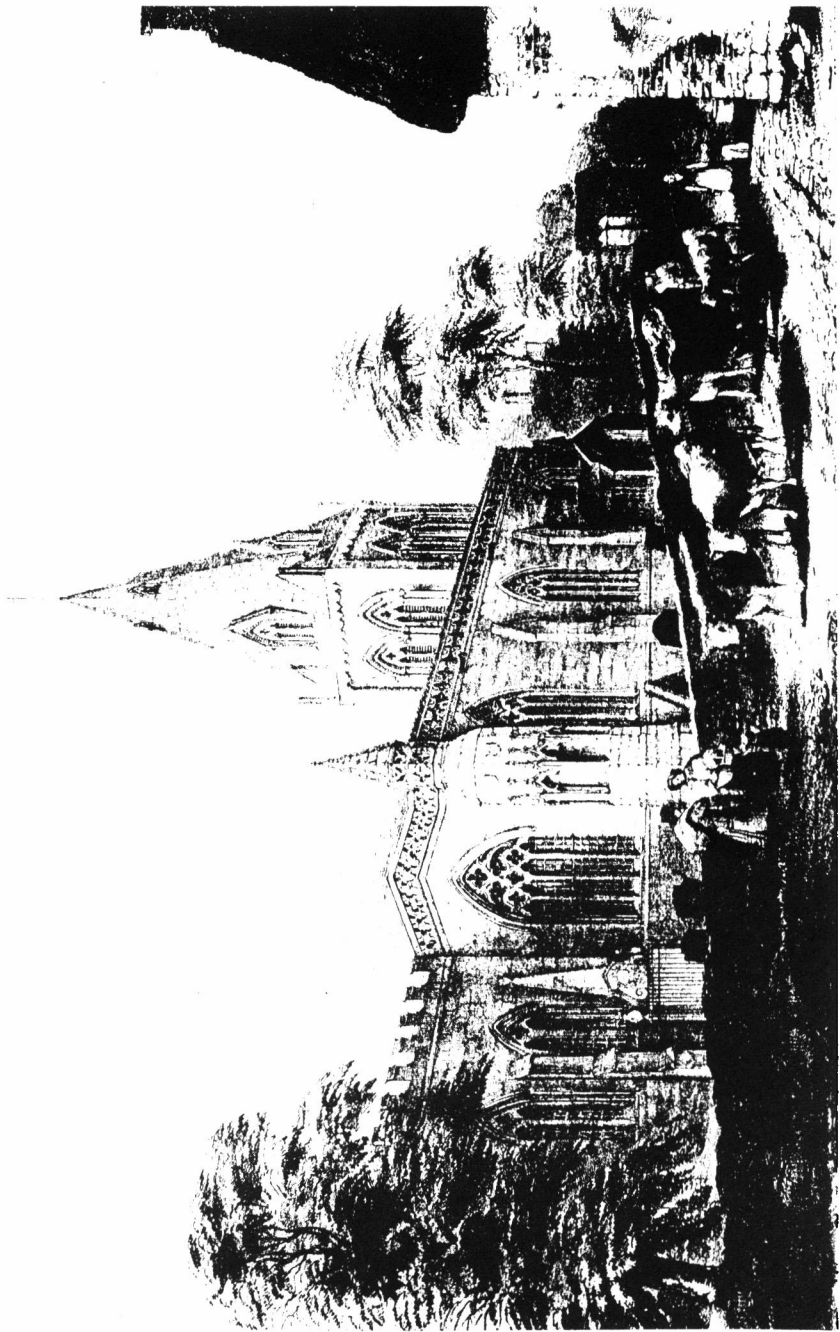
What may have been their first published local view, 'Leicester General News Room and Library', appeared in May 1842.³ Next month the first part of *Sketches in Leicestershire* was issued, priced five shillings: three views, lithographed, and two of them drawn and published by E S Palmer, consisting of 'The Hanging Rock', 'St Mary's Church, from the S.W.' and 'Granite Rocks, Beacon Hill'.

It was intended to be the first of twelve monthly parts, containing a total of thirty six plates, and for a while all went well; the second one was published in August, the third in September, the fourth in October, the fifth in November and the sixth in December. After that there was an awkward pause and it was not until June 1843 that parts seven and eight appeared.

Not all the original drawings were by Fanny herself. Three, of the Old Blue Boar Inn, of Rice Rocks and Bardon Hall and of Higham Church, were by the Leicester architect William Parsons; three more, shewing the Old West Bridge, Leicester and the doorways of All Saints, Belgrave and Bagworth churches, were by T F Lee, drawing master at the Proprietary School in New Walk; while seven others, of St Mary's church, St Margaret's church, Quenby Hall, Bradgate House, Bradgate Park, Kirby Castle and Swithland slate pits, were by the local artist B F Scott. Another, of Gracedieu Nunnery, was from a sketch by Ambrose Lisle Phillips.

Part eight seems to have been the last one to be issued. The series was clearly not a commercial success, in spite of long and enthusiastic reviews in the local newspapers and even the patronage of H M the Dowager Queen Adelaide. Neither this, nor the general lithographic printing business, nor Fanny's drawing school, now being conducted in Princess Street, were sufficient to support them. Sometime in the second half of 1843 the decision was made that Fanny and Edmund Palmer, their two children and Robert and Maria Bond would try their luck in the United States.

Exactly when they crossed the Atlantic is not known; but by January 1844 Fanny and her husband were established in New York as F & S Palmer, lithographic printers and publishers. Maria Bond set up as a teacher of painting, drawing and music, while her brother Robert became a still life and landscape painter, architectural draughtsman and music teacher.



Hallaton Church

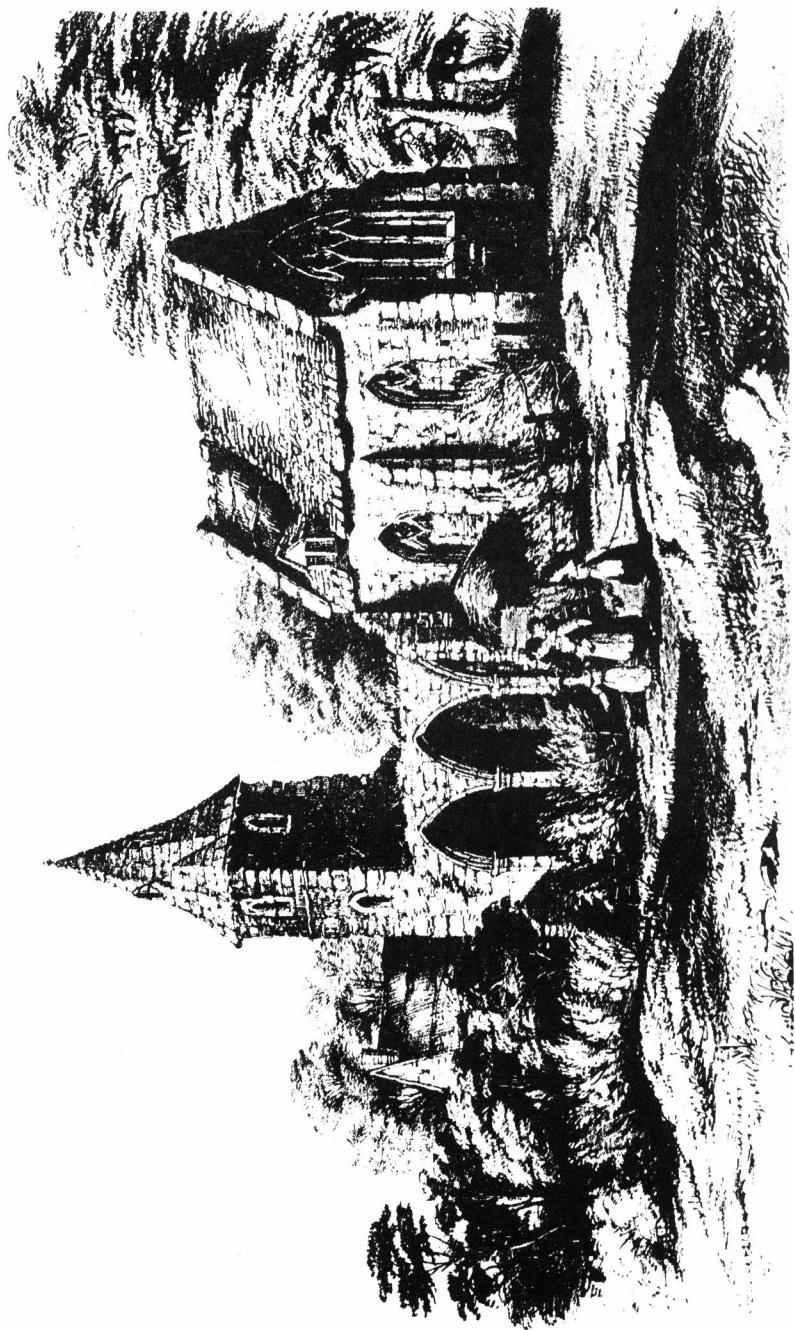
The Palmers, however, were to be no more successful in New York than they had been in Leicester. In spite of a willingness to take on any kind of printing work, as well as publishing their own prints from Fanny's drawings, in about 1851 the firm failed altogether. A couple of years before this Fanny had done some views of New York for another lithographic publisher called Nathaniel Currier. He now purchased their stock and engaged Fanny as a full-time employee.

In 1857 Nathaniel Currier went into partnership with James Merritt Ives and the firm became known as Currier & Ives. In the course of her association with Nathaniel Currier, then with Currier & Ives, Fanny Palmer is thought to have produced some two hundred lithographs, making both the original sketches and the drawings on stone. Her range of subjects was very wide — country landscapes, farm scenes, railroads, Mississippi River boats, clipper ships, fishing, winterscapes, country houses and homesteads, fruit and flower prints, hunting scenes and even the Civil War. She did not travel much and, apart from local scenes around New York, most of her pictures were worked up from photographs and other sources.

After the lithography business failed, the Palmer family moved from Lower Manhattan to Brooklyn, where Edmund became the landlord of a local tavern. The main interests of Mr Palmer were shooting and drinking and, although there is evidence that he did some work as a lithographer in New York, there is no doubt whatever that Fanny was the financial mainstay of the family. As a tavern keeper he apparently spent his time drinking the profits and no one was very surprised when in 1859 he fell downstairs in a Brooklyn hotel while intoxicated and broke his neck.

The death of her husband did not mark the end of Fanny's domestic problems. Her son Richard had modelled himself on his father, never worked and died from tuberculosis in 1867. Her daughter Frances, married with one child, was left a widow soon afterwards and returned to live with her mother, who also shared her home with her sister Maria. Robert, now married, still lived in Manhattan but called on his sisters once a week.

Fanny Palmer ceased to be employed by Currier & Ives in 1868. Whether she worked for them afterwards on a casual or occasional basis is uncertain and there seems to be little information about her final years. She died from tuberculosis on the 20th of August 1876, aged only sixty four, and was buried in Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn, along with other members of her family. Her daughter survived her by less than two years, dying from the same disease in 1878.



Ruins of Hemington Church

People who had known Fanny Palmer described her as a small, slight, cheerful woman, with dark hair and large dark eyes; long years spent bending over the lithographic stones at home had made her stoop as if she were deformed. There is only one known photograph of her, taken about 1865, shewing her seated.⁴

Sketches in Leicestershire

Drawn and lithographed by F F Palmer and printed and published by E S Palmer in 1842-3

| Part I | | Part VI | |
|---|-----|------------------------------|-------|
| Hanging Rock | | Hallaton Church | * |
| St Mary's Church, from the S.W. | + | Ragdale Old Hall | * |
| Granite Rocks, Beacon Hill | * | Old Blue Boar Inn, Leicester | + = * |
| Part II | | Parts VII and VIII | |
| St Margaret's Church | + | Kirby Castle | + = |
| Ruin in Bradgate Park | + = | Gracedieu Nunnery | + = |
| Loughborough from Cotes Hill | | Ruins of Hemington Church | * |
| | | Gaddesby Church | * |
| Part III | | Ashby de la Zouch Castle, | |
| Ashby de la Zouch Castle, from the S. | = * | from the N. | = * |
| Monastery of Mount St Bernard | | Higham Church | + * |
| Old West Bridge, Leicester | + = | Windows of St Mary's Church, | |
| | | Leicester and Ashby | |
| Part IV | | Folville Church | * |
| W. Front of Quenby Hall | + | Swithland slate pits | + |
| Ulverscroft Priory | = | Doorways of Bagworth | |
| Doorways of All Saints Church, | | Church and Horninghold | |
| Leicester and Belgrave Church | + | Church | + |
| Part V | | | |
| Bradgate Park | + | | |
| Rice Rocks and Bardon Hall | + | | |
| Leicester Abbey | = | | |
| + original drawing by another artist | | | |
| = a print of the same subject also in Flower's <i>Views</i> | | | |
| * a copy in the possession of Leicestershire Museums | | | |

This list is based chiefly on advertisements and reviews in the *Leicester Journal* from 24 June 1842 and 16 June 1843. It has not been possible to determine the order in which the prints in Parts VII and VIII were issued.

The following were announced in the *Leicester Journal*, 18 November 1842 for future publication but were probably never issued:-

Melton Church, Beaumanor Rocks, Jewry Wall, Interior of Bottesford Church.

In 1846 *Sketches in Leicestershire* was re-issued as a bound volume, with 'historical and descriptive notices' by J F Hollings, a master at the Proprietary School. It contains twenty four of the original lithographs, either new prints or, possibly, unsold prints from the original edition.

References:

1. For many years the chief source of information about the artists who worked for Currier & Ives was Harry T Peters, *Currier & Ives: Print-makers to the American People*, 2 vols, 1929, 1931; his biographical sketch of Fanny Palmer was based on material gathered by Harriet Waite, a print-dealer who interviewed three people who remembered Mrs Palmer. This was later supplemented by Mary Bartlett Cowdrey, 'Fanny Palmer, an American Lithographer' in Carl Zigrosser ed, *Prints: Thirteen Illustrated Essays on the Art of the Print*, 1963, and 'Frances Flora Bond Palmer' in E T James ed, *Notable American Women 1607-1950*, 1971. More recently her life in Leicester was the subject of Charlotte Streifer Rubinstein, 'The early Career of Frances Flora Bond Palmer' in *The American Art Journal*, Autumn 1985, pp 71-88. I have drawn information for this article from all the above.
2. See the above list of subjects
3. Although this seems an uncharacteristic choice of subject, in that it was a new rather than an old building, Fanny's local interests were not as antiquarian as the *Sketches* at first suggest. Two of her views do in fact shew modern buildings, 'Monastery of Mount St Bernard' and 'Loughborough from Cotes Hill'. The latter includes factory chimneys and a train crossing the landscape. This interest in railways is also demonstrated by four of her drawings in the possession of Leicestershire Museums, 'Leicester Station', 'Ullesthorpe Station', 'Viaduct at Sileby, Midland Railway' and 'Railway Bridge over the Trent', all done c 1840, and was to manifest itself again when she went to work for Currier & Ives.
4. Reproduced in Charlotte Streifer Rubinstein's article

NORTH EVINGTON CHILDHOOD RECOLLECTIONS, 1902-1916

George Thorpe

Born in 1899 at 170 East Park Road, overlooking the Spinney Hill Park and two doors from Saint Stephen's, I lived there until 1910. North Evington was in a sense a self-contained suburb. The planned market place never materialized but the open square remained with its sub fire station and sub police station bordering in Asfordby Street; and a Barclays Bank branch on Baggrave Street corner with a sub post office immediately opposite.

My father's shoe manufacturing business was also in Baggrave Street. Our factory keys were parked at the police station and we were thus friendly with members of the force. There's much been published over the years about the 'men in blue' of that period; but they seemed a decent lot of lads to me. As to treatment of the public, I used to be amused to see the number of children who 'got' lost in the area and were kept at the station until claimed, fed on biscuits and tea provided from the staff's own pockets.

Spence Street baths were nearby and the whole area was full of boot and shoe factories, and a few hosiery people too. Of the latter Chilprufe grew to be known internationally. Its owner, John Bolton, was a remarkable man; for, apart from his business, he spent much time lecturing on his hobby, medicines. I believe his father had been a doctor.

Speaking of the medical profession, I'm old enough to recall seeing some doctors doing their rounds by bicycle whilst clad in frock coats, some green with age. 1911 was a welcome date; for the National Insurance Act provided secure emoluments contra cash from their 'medical clubs' for treatment for the lower income group and fees for the middle and upper classes.

Our Dr Bray of Saint Saviour's Road had a landau and coachman. Rather abrupt in manner but a good doctor. My dad and he were fellow fishermen, so had a common bond. He undoubtedly saved my father's life, when the latter had a severe nervous breakdown when approximately 42 years of age in early 1914. He survived till he was 87.

But of early memories, about 1902 there was a bad outbreak of smallpox in the Midlands and my family evacuated to Hunstanton for a month to escape infection. I clearly recall how I spent much time on the passenger bridge watching the railway turntable at work and also recall the screams of crabs being boiled for the table. This at the age of three. Of course I was far too young to know why we were at the seaside; but years later I amazed my mother by recalling these incidents, which she agreed were true.

My bosom chum Wilfred Moore and self grew up two doors apart. As boys we were inseparable. Alas! He lies at Saint Omer, a casualty of World War One, dead before he was 18 years of age.

The Park was our playground, then in the charge of Mr Joe Arnold, a very pleasant gentleman and, incidentally, the father of Clem, who later became the Leicester Registrar. It used to be locked up at dusk and preliminary warning whistles were blown to advise the public to use the nearest gate to prevent being locked in. The acquisition of a whistle with similar warning notes to that of the official instrument provided two imps with much pleasure by using it prior to the official timing and causing members of the public to obey the warning notes.

We had our local celebrities too. 'Tug' Wilson the local boxer won a thousand pounds for standing up to the American Sullivan at the height of his fame for a requisite number of rounds; this by the skilful use of the bell and count. We boys knew him in later life as a fish and rabbit salesman with a shop in Saint Saviour's Road East and a barrow round.

But probably the most noticed was Joey Hallam, who built the Imperial Hotel on the Mere Road. He used to drive about in an aged open landau drawn by a horse, yellow with age and whose collar was shewing its straw padding. He owned a number of houses overlooking Spinney Hill Park from the Saint Saviour's Road side and the tale was told that when a tenant complained of rain falling onto his bed from a leaking roof, this landlord suggested using an umbrella. I regret that some of his properties, despite bearing Grecian goddess names, were rather neglected.

Captain Harrison, a retired regular army officer, spent much time on the Park walking with his pekinese. He didn't smoke but was popular with us boys, as he always carried 'humbugs'. In 1914 he was recalled and put in charge of the feeding of the troops at Glen Parva Barracks as Captain (later Major) Quarters. Personal experience apart when passing through, I met men from all over the world who declared it to be the best fed depot they'd experienced.

Another interesting old soldier was a Mr Battison, then a hay and corn merchant in Orson Street. He was a Crimea veteran, discharged, medically unfit, with a musket ball wound in an arm, which had to be dressed daily up to his death. He described the alternative. Amputation was offered but declined, after seeing others undergoing such treatment. This consisted of lying in the open and the limb removed without an anaesthetic. Someone sat on the man's head to keep him still and the stump treated with hot tar. Rather too primitive.

At the Moat Road-East Park Road corner we had a retired naval man, named Hood. His home had a flat roof and it was distinguished by a series of flag poles, upon which appeared various signals from time to time. We boys were far too ignorant to read their messages. Our limited naval knowledge was obtained from a cigarette card series entitled 'Life on a Man o' War'. Further, the old gentleman was very retiring and did not entertain us.

Nearby his home in the Moat Road I recall a fish and chip shop. Being strictly out-of-bounds by parental order explains our presence therein. The salt and vinegar containers were massive and on one occasion I loosened the tops of them. Thus when a gentleman used the salt pot, the resultant supply completely covered his chips. The reported promises as to what he'd do to the perpetrator of the mishap shook the culprit, who kept the place in voluntary exile for a long period. In passing, my bosom chum Wilfred and self were so much together that when retribution did catch up for such scrapes, one or the other, when solo, often received punishment for the other's misdeeds. Rough justice; but it balanced out.

Another visitor was the Italian organ grinder, with red coated monkey; but this entertainment was speedily banned on the grounds of cruelty to animals. Later the hurdy-gurdy obtained.

My pocket money was one halfpenny a week, later increased to one penny for cleaning dad's boots for seven days, plus a further one penny for cleaning the family table knives with a damp bathbrick cork, a particularly dirty job. I've always thought the inventor of 'stainless steel' worthy of a special

monument. I lost a job, but happily retained the pay. Of course, we could buy four ounces of good sweets for one penny then. How the sweet vendors made a profit after supplying the container paper bag is not known.

For games recreational we had marbles in various forms, tit-tat (later banned by law), jumbo, horseback fighting (boys on others' backs), running with hoops (mainly in iron), whip and top, for the lads; whilst the weaker sex did much skipping and shuttlecock playing. So the juniors had a pretty full life even in those days.

On dress, many boys wore corduroy trousers and jerseys, whilst the girls in the main had an overall pinnie. All wore boots. The senior male element largely sported breeches and leggings with cap or bowler, whilst our ladies had dresses that swept the ground and hats perched on top of a bandeau, which engaged both hands in lifting their nether garments and holding on their headgear. When some fashion genius ruled for shorter, sensible skirts, it gave a boost in the shoe trade for footwear design for the now visible feet.

In the advertising field, two productions gave cause for a laugh for those who knew the district. The Willow Brook which ambles through the Park is approximately six inches in depth; but this didn't stop one advertiser shewing a cargo steamer thereon loading cases of shoes from his factory. In the same issue, there was pictured another shoe factory with its V roofs apparently covering acres and stretching far into the distance. Agreed, it was a fair sized place; but enough's enough.

On transport, I recall the horse buses, followed by the horse trams and then the electric powered ones. The tram track was laid past our home. The full fare Clock Tower to Clock Tower via the circular ring via London Road, Evington Road, East Park Road (and vice versa) was one penny. And the enterprise shewed a profit. I recall the lead horse being attached to the horse tram to help it up the hill to Forest Road. We used to fill up the box at the then terminus, Smart's Field, with flints to be thrown under the horses' hooves to aid foothold on greasy days. Another very early memory is the locomotive passing on movable rails to use on the light temporary railway to carry building material up the hill to Gwendolen Road to build the then-styled Workhouse Infirmary.

For some years my family attended Melbourne Hall, which had a most wonderful minister, the Rev W Y Fullerton. After eighty odd years I still recall a couple of his remarkable sermons and all through my life have realised the truths contained in them. With its then one thousand members, the Hall had

wonderful congregations, which numbered a goodly sprinkling of well-known business men. People like John Bolton of Chilprufe, J W Morton, a shoe manufacturer, Tom Carvell of Lulham's, shoe factors, Mr Bailey, a school head and our church treasurer, John Pickard, head of a hosiery firm in Oxford Street and sometime honorary secretary of Leicester Royal Infirmary, to name a few. This church had an influence for good at home and in the foreign missionary field. Leaving Leicester in 1916, to live in the country for the benefit of my father's health, made the non-availability of such a church a very real loss for the family.

But to get back to boyhood, as a pupil at Moat Road School from the age of four, a first class basic education, under heads first Miss Hawley then Mr Pearson in the upper school, was enjoyed. Discipline was strict but just and I've never met a fellow old boy who didn't agree both counts.

The family moved to Saint Peter's Road and thence to Mere Road around 1910-11 and I went to the Wyggeston for four years. During this period Challfour and Eric Barnes and self used to walk down to the old grammar school together and formed friendships that lasted to their deaths. The Rev James Went was then our head master and his staff all BAs, MAs, BScs and MScs, their pay £150 per annum. Certainly a wonderful school and, despite criticism, shewed good results; and that's what education is all about.

It will be appreciated that the '14-'18 War clouded the latter part of my four year period there. This with members of the staff and many older boys joining up and we, younger ones, wondering . . . ? Still, I managed third class honours in the Oxford Locals of those days and an exemption from London Matric and from there joined my father's shoe manufacturing business in Baggrave Street in 1915, contra training to be a doctor (too much swatting).

It was a small but good business; capacity approximately a thousand pairs a week, forty employees. There were a number of similar shoe factories in the area, Kellet's, Stevenson's, Moore's, NEBCO, Lester, Collins & Green, Leeson's — all now occupied by other trades. Percival's still obtains.

The initiation into clicking was to be provided with a razor-sharp cutting knife, a tin pattern and a piece of leather to cut. The jump of the knife quickly provided the necessary cut finger to qualify. The entry into lasting came next. The old hand-lasters kept their sharp tacks in their mouths and these were retrieved one by one as required. The chew of tobacco also featured. What was not explained was the stock of tacks in open tin was blown free from dust prior to mouth entry. Thus the newcomer had his full mouth quota,

to the joy of onlookers. Real delight that, taking the boss's son down a peg or two (and a grammar school boy as well). I survived.

On the clerical side my tutor was my father. He explained, demonstrated and made sure proper attention was being paid; and then it was 'all yours'. This included costings, invoicing, packing and general 'dog's body'. Real deep-end tactics. His high opinion of some of my school-learnt geography was somewhat dented when I sent some goods to Shrewsbury. I'd never heard of Dewsbury and further the re-transfer cost ten shillings. I did learn that day 'if not sure, ask'. My starting pay for all this was five shillings per week, the usual in most trades then for beginners.

What surprised me was the paternal position of the boss in relation to his employees. Away from factory matters, they came to him with domestic troubles quite outside. We had a pact never to discuss such matters in our own home. My instructions, when paying wages, to drop in an extra in some such cases were private to the parties concerned.

Such are a few sketches of a Leicester boy, born and bred and very proud of it.

**'A VARIED AND NOVEL PROGRAMME': ERNEST ELLIOTT OF MARKET
HARBOROUGH AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT**
Carla Herbert and Steph Mastoris

Mainstream popular entertainment is an area generally neglected by local historians. Although there is considerable specialist literature on such things as the development of music hall or early television, most of this has a metropolitan or national bias and deals too much with the personalities involved and not enough with the more general reasons for its popular support. It is not hard to see the reason why this is. Apart from published contemporary accounts and a few reminiscences in popular memory, local popular entertainments such as dancing, comedy acts or concert parties leave little behind. Even the venues for such activities often change, so that it is hard to chart the landscape of this branch of popular culture. Any more information must come from the personal archives of people associated with the entertainment — diaries, personal snapshots, stage props, scripts and musical instruments. Even these are highly subjective and patchy in their coverage.

Recent work at the Harborough Museum on Ernest Elliott, a local popular entertainer active from the 1920s to the 1950s, has highlighted what a fascinating story there is to be told if more evidence survives. During the eleven years since this branch of the Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service opened, it has gradually acquired a substantial and highly detailed archive of Elliott's entertainment work. This now comprises several hundred items, including the more usual assorted props and photographs of performances by Elliott, newscuttings files and a few examples of working notes. The archives excels most others, however, because of the survival of a comprehensive five-volume engagement diary and a remarkable hundred-page typescript autobiography, 'Ernest Elliott — never 'erd of 'im!'. These not only tell Elliott's personal story but also allow an analysis to be made of the nature and extent of support given to popular entertainers in the Midlands during the first half of the twentieth century.

Ernest Elliott was born in Market Harborough in 1894, the eldest son of a relatively well-to-do tailor and gentleman's outfitter. He grew up with a great love for music and the performing arts. His father, Arthur, was a popular pianist and played the organ at a local Congregational chapel for many years. Ernest evidently inherited this talent and from an early age he would spend hours picking out tunes on his father's piano. On the annual family holiday at the seaside he would search out the Punch and Judy shows and the

singing and dancing Pierrots (entertainments severely frowned upon by his parents).

When he was ten years old, Elliott started performing himself. He and a group of friends held small 'entertainments', afternoons in a room under his father's workshop, charging a halfpenny to anyone who wanted to come and see them. They did short comic sketches, sang songs and mimicked professional entertainers of the day. By the age of thirteen Elliott had diversified. He now had a set of conjuror's tricks, owned a ventriloquist's dummy and had tried his hand at stand-up comedy. He continued his piano study and bought all the music he could afford (especially humorous pieces by favourite comedians). Ever looking for new forms of entertainment, he became enchanted by the 'concert party' format. This usually consisted of a group of seven or eight people who provided a full evening's programme of singing, dancing, humorous sketches and so on. In 1912, aged eighteen, Elliott formed his own amateur concert party and gave shows in the area in their spare time.

Elliott had joined the family business just before his fifteenth birthday but took little interest in it until early 1914, when his father became seriously ill and died six months later. Ernest was left in charge of the shop in Church Street and things became even more complicated with his conscription into the Royal Navy. The business survived, however, and Elliott continued solely in charge until the post-war slump of the 1920s, when the need to find extra income forced him to try semi-professional entertaining and employ a shop manager. Although Elliott had a wide repertory of songs and sketches, he needed a more unique attraction and his famous 'Human Marionette' was born.

This curious show was based on part of the routine of a Leicester entertainer, John Goddard, whom Elliott had accompanied several times. The show consisted of a small proscenium arch and stage and headless stick puppets. These were slung from the neck of the performer, whose body was hidden behind a black curtain, so creating a miniature character with an oversize human head. By working stiff black wires from behind the curtain, the marionette could be made to perform a huge spectrum of tricks and humorous songs — 'All that a human can do . . . and MORE!' as Elliott himself put it. He gave the first performance of his marionettes on the 20th of January 1921 and for the next thirty five years he toured the country with his act that combined his own comic songs with his Human Marionettes.

His show was a local affair to begin with. He performed at local church fetes and Sunday School parties. His popularity grew rapidly and by the late 1920s

he was performing throughout the Midlands, and even further afield. Between 1921 and 1957 he travelled over half a million miles and performed in over six hundred cities, towns and villages. This popularity fired his imagination and his repertoire grew. He wrote more songs and made more marionette sketches. In all he wrote over two hundred and fifty songs and created about thirty marionette characters.

Today his comic songs seem very tame. With titles such as 'Don't put salt on the dicky bird's tail', 'Oi'm art and abart agen' and 'They put me on the Club again', their humour is very gentle, arising from plays on words, social niceties, stock national or occupational characteristics and extremely clever tunes combining several popular melodies in one song. One of the most famous of Elliott's songs — still well-remembered locally — was 'The Sheik and his camel', first performed early in 1937.

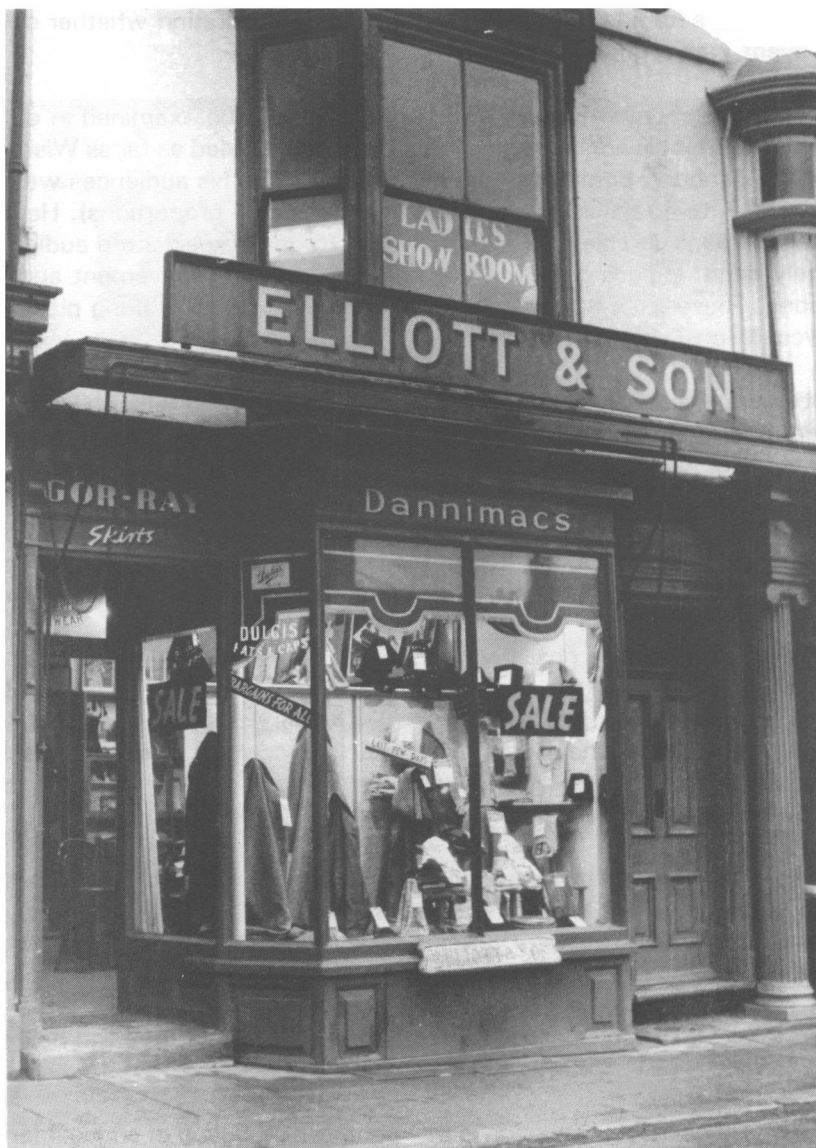
I'm a Sheik, Sheik, Sheik and I ride on a camel,
and I ride on a camel with a hump, hump, hump.
And I'm seik, seik, seik, 'cos I sit on a pommel,
and under the pommel there's a lump, lump, lump.

And we sway, sway, sway, 'till we reach an oasis,
then I land on my basis with a bump, bump, bump.
I'm a Sheik, Sheik, Sheik and I ride on a camel,
And I'm like the camel — I've the hump, hump, hump!

This was sung while he manipulated a marionette which danced across the mini stage and it is perhaps this combination of music, lyrics and curious visuals which enchanted many audiences.

Elliott gave his final professional performance in 1957, retiring due both to ill health and a recognition that the nature of popular entertainment was rapidly changing. He returned to tailoring for about another decade and died in 1974 at the age of eighty. He was an extremely popular local figure in Market Harborough and in 1960 had been awarded the town's Citizenship Cup, its equivalent of honorary freemanship.

What was the secret of his success, apart from his obvious talent, initiative and energy? Elliott's detailed engagement performance records provide several answers. These records take the form of a notebook and four loose-leaf bundles of paper, arranged topographically, which list every engagement in each place, together with details of the songs and routines performed. This ensured that repeat appearances did not present the audience with



Photograph of the Elliott family tailor and outfitters shop in Market Harborough

repeat performances. They also curtly record the good, or bad local accompanists he had to use as well as sometimes stating whether or not the event was a good 'do'.

These records allow the nature of Elliott's work to be examined in detail. They shew that his area of regular employment extended as far as Wisbech, Bedford, Banbury, Birmingham and Doncaster. Here his audiences were of a general nature (children and adults in about equal proportions). He also undertook considerable long-distance work for more specialised audiences (largely adult) including the YMCA, the Co-Operative Movement and the Masons. These gave him regular engagements in such far-flung places as Newcastle-on-Tyne, St Helens and London.

Elliott's act, especially his marionettes, was very popular with children and children constituted his most frequent type of audience. He performed at private birthday and Christmas parties, aristocratic houses, works and chapel children's parties, schools and charitable organisations. Children constituted over half his audiences in village engagements and about a quarter of them in the larger local towns, but less in those further away. His autobiography has a fascinating chapter on entertaining children, which shews insight into their psychology.

The secret is, if you possibly can, give (children) something to look at, give them something to amuse them and captivate their attention. It's a delicately balanced art. But I think when Primary children are so absorbed in the show that they hate to "leave the room" for fear of missing something, and at the end there are "little pools" on the matting — then your efforts have been really successful. (p 24)

Elliott's work at adult engagements did not alter the tone of his material. In his autobiography he is keen to stress that his act contained nothing in bad taste. In Leicester a large number of factory and employee social clubs engaged him. Elsewhere his audiences were from a wide range of groups, with a strong emphasis on Nonconformist congregations, Conservative associations, local Co-Operative societies, women's institutes and hospital bazaars.

There was considerable variation in the monthly distribution of engagements. Elliott's busiest period overall was between October and April and the slackest was July to August. The yearly density of engagements between 1921 and 1957 also shews a complex pattern created by his growing reputation, the proximity and size of destinations and the effects of the Second World War. Larger towns nearer Market Harborough provided him



Ernest Elliott performing his Sheik on a camel 'human marionette' routine

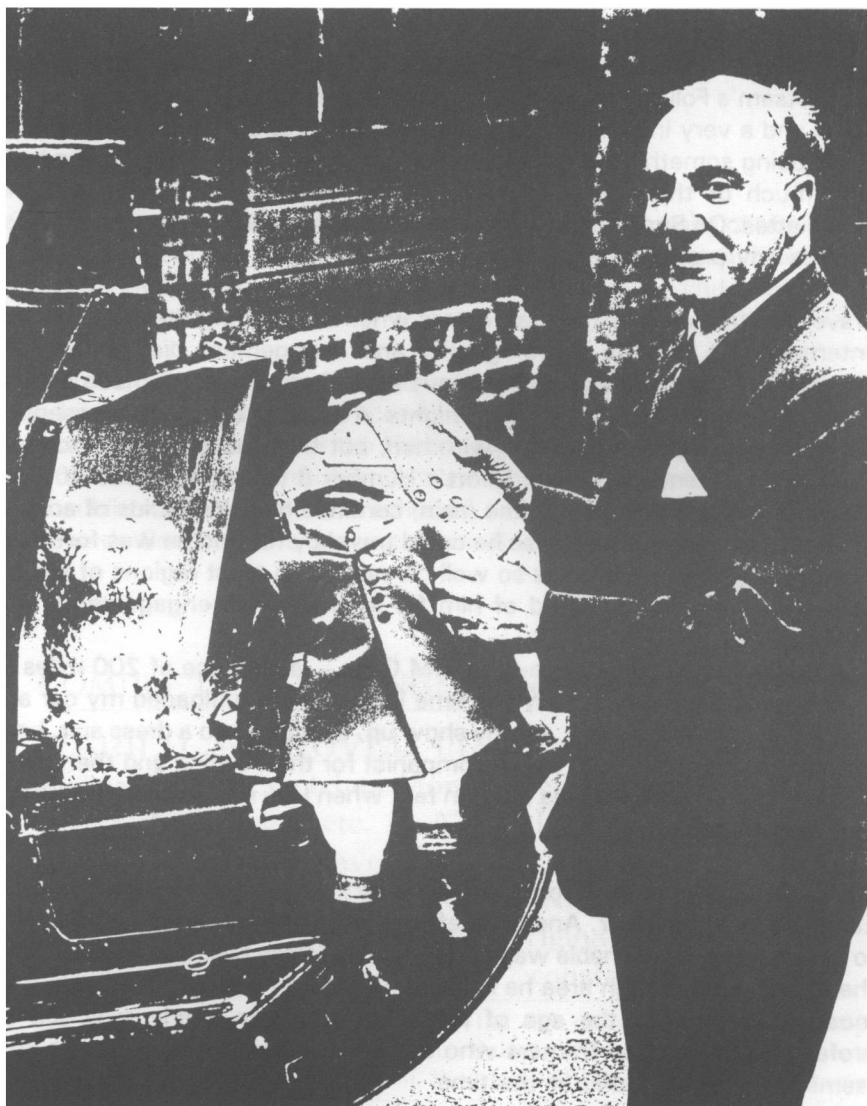
with work virtually every year. There were nearly three hundred engagements in Leicester alone. Work further afield began in earnest around 1929 but was seriously interrupted ten years later by the war.

Employment in smaller towns and villages was more patchy but compensated for lack of demand during the war. From those close to Market Harborough, such as Lutterworth or Hallaton, which provided eighteen and nineteen jobs respectively, demand was steady throughout his working life, with noticeable gaps during the last five years of the 1930s, the late 1940s and early 1950s, when destinations further afield were being visited most often. His autobiography bears this out by suggesting that local work provided his initial support and necessarily predominated during the Second World War because of problems with transport.

Elliott's more long-distance work was made up largely of events organised by the YMCA (from about 1925), the Co-Operative Movement (from the late 1920s) and the Masons (from 1948). His autobiography stresses the role of a number of well-placed people in these organisations who recommended Elliott through their professional network. Ernest Haizelden, the General Secretary of the Nottingham YMCA, for instance, not only got him work throughout the Midlands but also facilitated regular engagements in Manchester and the rest of Lancashire when he moved there in 1929. Elliott also quickly learnt the value of getting engagements at the regional or national annual conferences of these organisations.

More intriguing is Elliott's work in broadcasting. Throughout his career he tried hard to get into regional and national radio as well as early television broadcasting. Although he met with some success, it is clear that neither his talent nor his luck in contacts were of the best. In the 1920s he worked for the BBC in its regional studios in Nottingham and Birmingham but a problem was that his supporters in the corporation moved on and their successors were often not so keen on his act. He also had fifteen engagements on early television. The first of these was during the pioneering broadcasts by John Logie Baird in 1931.

It was very crude in those far off days . . . it was only a 35-line picture . . . and looked as if it was pouring with rain . . . We wore blue make-up and the studio was too small for my Marionette show, so I just did a few songs at the piano. We artists were able to go into the next room and see each other on the TV screen . . . I met the great Logie Baird, and I shall always remember his excitement when someone held a watch in front of the camera and he was able to actually see the second hand going round on his screen. (p 37)



Ernest Elliott displaying some of his 'human marionette' props and costumes

In 1948 and 1949 Elliott undertook his two most important long-term engagements working with professional variety entertainers. Through Cally Lambert, impresario and landlord of the Freemason's Arms, Market Harborough, he was engaged by Flotsam (B C Hilliam) for two seasons with his 'Flotsam's Follies' concert party, which comprised, amongst others, Will Kings and a very inexperienced Tony Hancock. His autobiography hints at Elliott being something of a junior partner in these tours, as he took a hand with much of the properties and lighting, besides performing with his marionettes. On Sundays he usually fell foul of the entertainment laws which forbade any props to be used on stage.

Travel and transport are crucial factors when considering the career of any entertainer. In Elliott's autobiography and engagement diaries they are omnipresent, perhaps due to the heavy load his marionettes made and his desire to sleep in his own bed most nights. A car was a very early essential. Often an accompanist travelled with him; but this does not seem to have made the problem any easier. Elliott's Humber 8 had a top speed of thirty five miles an hour and this, in the main, confined him to a radius of activity of about sixty miles. Otherwise he could travel by rail and he was fortunate that Market Harborough was so well connected to most regions of the rail network. The effort required of him for long-distance engagements was considerable.

A journey to Newcastle-on-tyne Y.M.C.A. — a distance of 200 miles — was quite a journey . . . By the time I'd got there, unloaded my car and put it away for the night, set my show up, changed into a dress suit, been through the music with my accompanist for the evening and then given the show, — well — I was tired! In fact when I lay my head on the pillow, it was throbbing. (p 14)

By his final calculation Elliott travelled over half a million miles during his career as an entertainer. And such efforts were not unrewarded; he seems to have earned a reasonable wage and kept the family business afloat. Within the Market Harborough area he is still remembered with great affection by most residents over the age of forty. He was also highly regarded by professional variety performers who considered him to be one of the best 'semi-pro' artists around at the time.

Elliott's career spanned a period of very great advances in mass communication on radio and television as well as in recorded sound. He did not shun these new performance media (it is worth remembering that at this time broadcasts were essentially live performances as well); but their nature was not best suited to the intimate magic of his marionette act. By the time of

his retirement, TV and radio were diminishing the attraction of live entertainment and reducing the status of amateur performers within the community. For us today, therefore, the story of Ernest Elliott's varied career provides a useful insight on the extent and nature of the popular enthusiasm for live, light entertainment during the first half of this century.

Sources:

This article would not have been possible without the generosity of Mrs Elliott in loaning and subsequently donating her husband's papers and props or without Mr George Pickering's help and advice in locating and interpreting much of this material.

At the time of writing, December 1993, Elliott's papers are being transferred to the Leicestershire Record Office, while his stage props and marionettes form part of the collection of the Harborough Museum. His autobiography 'Ernest Elliott — never 'erd of 'im!', from which the quotations are taken, will be published in due course, it is hoped, by Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service in its 'Leicestershire Remembered' series.

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Text from an early publicity leaflet for Ernest Elliott as an entertainer

REPORTS

Christine Draycott, Adam J N Goodwin, Mary Toms

LEICESTERSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY COUNCIL ORAL HISTORY COMPETITION

The written word has long been our window on the past as experienced by literate people. Only oral history, however, can hope to pass on the rich tapestry and feel of everyday life. Everyone has something worth recording to say about their life, not only because of its relevance to that person but also because it gives an insight into the general fabric of that person's life and family, their beliefs, their dwelling, their occupations and their surroundings.

In July 1993 the Leicestershire Local History Council launched an Oral History Competition. Mr and Mrs Michael Woodford of Youngs Cameras, Leicester, very generously offered to sponsor the competition as part of their company's bi-centenary celebrations.

Twelve entries were received. The wealth and variety of the material presented made up for the slightly disappointing number.

The class for a recording not exceeding fifteen minutes had two entries. The winner was Mrs Joan Stevenson of Newton Linford. Her recording of Mrs Florrie Anderson and Mrs Gwen Wakefield re-living their life in the village prior to and during the Second World War produced a wide range of material in a friendly 'fireside chat' approach. Second was Mr Harry Limbert of Quorn, who recalled 'A week in his life in Martin Street, Leicester', where he lived as a boy in 1927 — a delightful story of life in this city street narrated by his grandson Carl Limbert.

Eight entries were received for the class for recordings of up to thirty minutes. 'The life and times of Mr Eric Flowers, woodman on Barkby Hall Estate', recorded by Mrs Wendy Madelin of Gaddesby, took the first prize — a fascinating anecdotal picture of life in a rural village in the 1930s. In second place the 'Childhood memories of Humberstone Garden City', narrated by Mr Michael Neal of Braunstone, took the listener into the living room of his home. In joint third place were the 'women's land army memories' of Mrs Margaret Pearce of Queniborough, recorded by Mrs Angelia Pick of Barkby Thorpe, and a well-conducted interview by Miss Jennifer Shepherd of Barkby of Mr Jack Richardson speaking about his memories of Barkby during the early part of this century.

The remaining four entries were all highly commended. Mrs Jenny Wilson of Leicester tackled the difficult task of interviewing a frail ninety-year-old Mrs Scott, which produced many details of her childhood in Aylestone Park and her working life during the First World War. A second recording by Mrs Wilson, of Mrs Ivy Baker, born in 1912, recounted her early life in Gladstone Street, Leicester. Mrs Dorothy Wilkes of Syston recorded Mr George Richardson speaking of his boyhood in Rearsby and Queniborough in the early years of this century. Mrs Sue Bates of Barrow-on-Soar recorded many interesting stories of the village in the 1920s remembered by Mrs Rose Clarke.

Of the two entries received for the class for young persons under the age of eighteen years, the first prize was awarded to sixteen-year-old Mandy Kealy, who managed to capture the emotional feelings of Mrs Palmer's Second World War experiences in the Women's Land Army when working in the Vale of Belvoir. The runner-up was nine-year-old Ruth Clarke of Glenfield, who interviewed her great-grandmother aged ninety six and discovered what schooldays were like in the early 1900s in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

The presentation of awards by Mr and Mrs Woodford took place at the Leicestershire County Record Office in November and was attended by some fifty people — members, competitors, judges and friends. All the tapes were available to hear and the undoubted enthusiasm of those present made a most warm and convivial evening. The tapes will together make a contribution to the oral archives of the County Record Office, where they have been deposited.

M T

LEICESTERSHIRE RECORD OFFICE REMOVAL TO WIGSTON MAGNA

Leicestershire County Council's new Record Office, which opened to the public on the 8th of February 1993 and which was officially opened by HRH the Duke of Gloucester on the 13th of May, represents a landmark in service to everyone interested in Leicestershire's history. The amalgamation of the Record Office and the Leicestershire Collection means that for the first time all the county's local studies resources are under one roof. The office's home since 1957 had been No 57 New Walk, Leicester. Following local government reorganization in 1974 and the merger with the city archives, the accommodation for collections, staff and visitors, despite

being extended, became increasingly cramped. By the end of the 1980s three 'outstores' were in operation so that only a quarter of the ever-growing holdings were actually housed at No 57. The Leicestershire Collection of books, maps, newspapers, periodicals, recordings and other local studies material had been housed and growing equally at the Reference Library in Bishop Street since 1905.

In July 1991 work began on the £1½ million project to convert the former All Saints School in Long Street, Wigston into accommodation for the public and staff and to build a new strongroom at the rear. The strongroom was designed in accordance with the relevant British Standard and the principle of thermal inertia; it relies on its massive construction to maintain correct levels of temperature and humidity. The new building was to be handed over in April or May 1992 but, owing to a series of frustrating delays with the construction work, the removal did not commence until November.

Planning and preparing for the move had taken the best part of two years. All four shelf miles of archives were either boxed or packaged. Crucial to the whole operation was the computerizing of the location index to the collections. The removal presented the opportunity to arrange the collections from all four sites in proper order. 10,000 entries were made on computer, allowing accessions to be sorted into the numerical order required for storage at Wigston and new shelf locations to be calculated. A total of 28,000 linear feet of shelving was installed in the new strongroom, to accommodate 20,000 feet of archives and 3,000 feet of books, leaving 5,000 feet for future expansion. Labels shewing new shelf numbers were printed for every single item to be moved; these were then colour-coded to assist in the actual removal. Remarkably all 48,000 labels were stuck on by the staff in three weeks.

The first van arrived on Monday the 9th of November and the office was closed down for the next three months. A strict timetable had been prepared in conjunction with the removers, who loaded up collections at the old stores and delivered them to Wigston, where Record Office staff were responsible for the arduous task of shelving every item. Slowly but surely the new strongroom filled up with collections from 57 New Walk, Bishop Street, Newarke Houses Museum, New Walk Museum and last but not least the dreaded Humberstone Drive outstore. The whole process was of course an enormous logistic exercise; but the considerable preparation paid dividends.

The new office has already welcomed a record 15,000 searchers in its first year, an increase of 50% on the previous figure and a far cry from the 394

who first used the searchroom at 57 New Walk in 1957. Visitors now enjoy two much larger and more comfortable searchrooms, all resources accessible together, an education/lecture room, a rest area, disabled access and toilet and late evening opening on Wednesdays. Nostalgia for New Walk and any regret at leaving its central location are far outweighed by these vastly improved facilities and the people of Leicestershire now have a Record Office to serve them well into the next century.

A J N G

FRIENDS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LOCAL HISTORY AT LEICESTER UNIVERSITY

The Department of English Local History, founded in 1948 under the late Professor W G Hoskins, has become well known through its pioneering work on the cultural, topographical, economic and social history of many parts of England. It has recently moved to splendid new premises at Marc Fitch House, substantially renovated through the generosity of the Marc Fitch Fund. The two most important resources of the house are the Map Room, which includes an especially good coverage of Leicestershire Ordnance Survey maps, and the Marc Fitch Fund Library, which is especially strong on genealogy and family history.

The Friends of the Department are an informal body of local historians comprising current members of the Department, both staff and students, former members and any other person who has the interests of the subject at heart. Friends receive advance notice of the Department's seminars and access, by arrangement, to the facilities of Marc Fitch House, 'a place of friendly erudition'.

The principal event in the calendar of the Friends is the annual W G Hoskins Lecture, given by a scholar who had made a substantial contribution to local history. This is also a social occasion, with home-made tea in Marc Fitch House and a book sale. There is usually an annual outing too. The principal means of keeping in touch is through the annual Newsletter, which is circulated in the autumn. Further details of membership and of the Department are available from the Secretary of the Department, Mrs Pauline Whitmore, Marc Fitch House, 5 Salisbury Road, Leicester (telephone 522762).

C D

LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETIES

a. Periodicals

b. Occasional publications

c. Member of Leicestershire Local History Council

- c* ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH Local History Society
Mrs J M Bolderson, 12 Tower Gardens, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
- bc* ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH Museum
North Street, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
- bc* BARKBY Local History Group
Mr R Adams, 33 Brookside, Barkby, Leicester
BARKBY THORPE see Barkby
BARWELL see Earl Shilton
- abc* Herricks and BEAUMANOR Society
Mr D Andreas, 2A Victoria Road, Woodhouse Eaves, Loughborough
- bc* BILLESDON Local History Group
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- bc* BIRSTALL and District Local History Society
Mrs P A Kirk, 92 Stonehill Avenue, Birstall, Leicester
BLABY Heritage Group
Mrs H Chapman, 25 Cork Lane, Glen Parva, Leicester
BRANSTON and District Local History Group
Miss A B Hall, Main Street, Branston by Belvoir, (Grantham)
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BURBAGE see Hinckley
- bc* CASTLE DONINGTON Local History Group
Mr B M Townsend, 7 Borough Street, Castle Donington, (Derby)
COALVILLE 150 Group
Mr S Duckworth, 125 Highfield Street, Coalville
MANTLE Oral History Project
Springboard Centre, Mantle Lane, COALVILLE
- c* COALVILLE and DISTRICT Local History Society
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- c* DESFORD and District Local History Group
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- b* DISEWORTH Local History Group
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- bc* DUNTON BASSETT Local History Group
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- bc* EARL SHILTON and District Local History Group
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- ab* EAST MIDLANDS Heraldry Society
Miss I M Norman, 77 Lorne Road, Leicester
ELMESTHORPE see Earl Shilton
- c* ENDERBY History Group
Mr J R Crofts, 1 Sheridan Close, Narborough, Leicester
- b* EVINGTON Local History Society
Miss A Sharpe, Evington Library, Evington Lane, Leicester
- c* FLECKNEY and SADDINGTON Historical Society
Mrs E M Morley, 38 Victoria Street, Fleckney, Leicester
- b* FOXTON Inclined Plane Trust
Mr D Goodwin, Bottom Lock, Foxton, Market Harborough
- abc* FRISBY-ON-THE-WREAKE Historical Society
Mr J I Greaves, 'Ruswick', Oakway, Frisby-on-the-Wreake,
Melton Mowbray
Newsletter
GLENFIELD and WESTERN PARK Archaeological and Historical Group,
incorporating Leicester Dowsing Group
Mr A A Huscroft, 50 Chadwell Road, Leicester
- abc* GREAT EASTON and District Local History Society
Mrs E Meechan, 10 Barnsdale Close, Great Easton, Market
Harborough
Newsletter
Friends of HALLATON Museum
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- b* HATHERN Local History Society
Mr A M Swift, 18 Shepshed Road, Hathern, Loughborough
- HIGHAM-ON-THE-HILL see Hinckley
- ac* HINCKLEY Local History Group
Mr D F Allinson, 97 Leicester Road, Hinckley
The Hinckley Historian
- ac* HOUGHTON NEWS
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- abc* HUSBANDS BOSWORTH Historical Society
Mrs I Pepperill, 19 High Street, Husbands Bosworth,
Lutterworth
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- abc* IBSTOCK Historical Society
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- c* KEGWORTH Village Association
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- c* KIMCOTE and WALTON Village History Society
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- abc* The Victorian Society, LEICESTER Group
Mrs E Chambers, 28 Rectory Lane, Thurcaston, Leicester
- ab* Living History Unit
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ROWLATTS HILL Local History Group
Coleman Road Neighbourhood Centre, LEICESTER
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- abc* LEICESTERSHIRE Family History Society
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- a* LEICESTERSHIRE Industrial History Society
Mr D Baker, 7 Hospital Lane, Swannington, Coalville
- bc* LEICESTERSHIRE Libraries and Information Service
Thames Tower, 96 Burleys Way, Leicester
- ac* LEICESTERSHIRE Local History Council
Leicestershire Record Office, Long Street, Wigston magna, Leicester
The Leicestershire Historian
- a* LEICESTERSHIRE Museums Association
Mrs J Smith, 29 Cornwall Road, South Wigston, Leicester
- a* Friends of the LEICESTERSHIRE Record Office
Mr R P Jenkins, Leicestershire Record Office, Long Street,
Wigston magna, Leicester
For the Record
- abc* LEICESTERSHIRE and RUTLAND Federation of Women's Institutes
135 Loughborough Road, Leicester

- a* LOUGHBOROUGH and DISTRICT Archaeological Society
Mrs A Tarver, 9 Church Street, Belton, Loughborough
Bulletin
- c* HARBOROUGH Museum
Mr S Mastoris, Adam and Eve Street, MARKET HARBOROUGH
Friends of HARBOROUGH Museum
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- ac* MARKET HARBOROUGH Historical Society
Mrs A Paul, Harborough Museum, Adam and Eve Street, Market
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The Harborough Historian
- b* MEASHAM Village History Group
Mrs P Staley, 17 Byron Crescent, Measham, (Burton)
Friends of MELTON Carnegie Museum
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- c* MELTON MOWBRAY and District Historical Society
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Friends of MOIRA Furnace,
Mr B Waring, 11 Ashby Road, Moira, Coalville
Local Archaeology and History Group (NEWBOLD VERDON)
Mr M W Harding, 57 Arnolds Crescent, Newbold Verdon, Leicester
- bc* OADBY Local History Group
Mr D Wills, 70 Hidcote Road, Oadby, Leicester
- c* History of OLD DALBY (Hodcloppers)
Mr S S D Lytton-Anderson, Home Farm, Old Dalby, Melton Mowbray
- ab* OLD UNION CANALS Society
Mrs E Thresh, 22 Mountfields Drive, Loughborough
Union
- b* PACKINGTON Village History Group
Packington C of E Primary School, Mill Street, Packington,
Ashby-de-la-Zouch
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QUORN see Beaumanor
- bc* REARSBY Local History Group
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- ab* RUTLAND Local History and Record Society
Mr J Crossley, Rutland County Museum, Catmos Street, Oakham,
Rutland
Rutland Record
SAPCOTE see Earl Shilton, Hinckley
- c* SHAWELL Historical Society
Mrs E Raven, Shawell Hall, Shawell, Lutterworth
- bc* SHEPSHED Local History Society
Mrs L M Kettle, 133 Leicester Road, Shepshed, Loughborough
- c* SOMERBY Local History Society
Mrs J Roe, 16 High Street, Somerby, Melton Mowbray
STOKE GOLDING see Hinckley
STONEY STANTON see Earl Shilton, Hinckley
SWANNINGTON Heritage Trust
Mr D Baker, 7 Hospital Lane, Swannington, Coalville
SWITHLAND see Beaumanor
- c* SYSTON Local History Group
Mrs E Toon, 69 East Avenue, Syston, Leicester
THRUSSINGTON Local History Society
Mr R E Banks, 12 Back Lane, Thrussington, Leicester
THURCASTON see Birstall
THURMASTON see Birstall
- a* VAUGHAN Archaeological and Historical Society
Miss D Armitage, Fair Lawn, Thurlaston Lane, Earl Shilton, Leicester
Transactions
WANLIP see Birstall
- a* WESLEY Historical Society, EAST MIDLANDS Branch
Dr J Waller, 90 Forest Road, Loughborough
Heritage
- bc* WHITWICK Historical Group
Professor J A G Knight, The Meadows, 25 Meadow Lane, Coalville
Friends of WIGSTON Framework Knitting Museum
Mr I Varey, 2 Paget Court, Paget Street, Kibworth, Leicester
- ac* Greater WIGSTON Historical Society
Mrs D Chandler, 3 Eastway Road, WIGSTON MAGNA, Leicester
Bulletin
- c* WOLDS Historical Organisation
Mr R Trubshaw, 2 Cross Hill Close, Wymeswold, Loughborough
- bc* WOLVEY Local History Group
Mrs F Lewis, 4 Orchard Close, Wolvey, Hinckley
WOODHOUSE see Beaumanor
WOODHOUSE EAVES see Beaumanor

BOOK REVIEWS

John D Anderson, John Goodacre — Leicestershire Local History Council
Adam J N Goodwin, Carl W Harrison — Leicestershire Record Office
Heather E Broughton, Yolanda C Courtney — Leicestershire Museums
Helen Edwards, Lois Edwards, John Hinks, Carole Richardson,
Christine Taggart — Leicestershire Libraries

AROUND RUTLAND IN OLD PHOTOGRAPHS

Tim Clough

Alan Sutton with Leicestershire Museums 1993 £7.99

RUTLAND: A Portrait in Old Picture Postcards

Andrew Jenkins

**S B Publications, 19 Grove Road,
Seaford, East Sussex 1993 £6.50 (£1 p & p)**

The Alan Sutton 'in old photographs' series is a popular success throughout the country. The usual format is a 6" by 8½" 'perfect-bound' book of 160 pages in glossy card covers reproducing over 250 images, often two to a page, all at a very reasonable price. Introductory text and captions and references to sources are kept to a minimum.

The advantage of the volume covering Rutland is that the compiler is Keeper of Rutland County Museum, from which most of the 255 images come. In his introduction he draws attention to several local photographers and, although few of the pictures are credited, it would presumably be possible to trace most of them by enquiring. The book is arranged under the usual themes, but starting with Oakham as the county town and ending with views of some of the villages. We can have confidence in the choice of images and in the captions; one of the latter includes an autobiographical note.

From its title Andrew Jenkins' book might appear more limited in scope. His views are arranged under the names of villages but the strength of his work is his research into local photographers issuing postcards. He has identified twenty from within the county itself and has ascribed sixty of his one hundred pictures to them and to others from adjoining counties. The images are all reproduced one to a page, leaving room for more discursive and informative captions.

The store of such images is by no means exhausted; I did not notice one image appearing in both books.

J G

THE RIVER SOAR IN OLD PHOTOGRAPHS

Don Wix, Pauline Shacklock and Ian Keil

Alan Sutton

1992 £7.99

This collection of illustrations, mainly old black and white photographs, shows the many different ways the Soar has been used in recent times, for water-mills, commercial carrying and varied forms of recreation such as pleasure boating, regattas, fishing and ice skating. Its floods are a mixed blessing, making the roads impassable but at the same time enriching the soil of the water meadows with silt.

The illustrations are arranged generally, but not strictly, in order of the river's passage from its source near to Leicestershire's southern boundary with Warwickshire to the confluence with the River Trent in the north, a distance of some forty miles. Opinions differ on the true source; of the streams converging near Sharnford to form the infant river, the Ordnance Survey nominates the one originating by Leicester Grange, just into Warwickshire, as the Soar Brook, whereas this book favours the stream originating close to Burbage.

Several old engravings are included and in particular show contemporary scenes along the riverside of inner Leicester. One scene is completely different, depicting an unlucky scold on a ducking stool. Unfortunately the sources of the engravings cannot be consulted as references are omitted.

Some captions are not fully accurate; typically the Raw Dykes electricity generating station did not, as is implied, supply power to Leicester's early electric trams, that honour falling to the power station near to Abbey Park. A Great Central Railway bridge is shown as a canal bridge at Northgate for heavy traffic and Belgrave House is captioned as Belgrave Hall. It is nevertheless an interesting book presenting many aspects of social history along the course of this important waterway.

J D A

SWITHLAND WOOD: A Study of its History and Vegetation

Stephen Woodward

Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service 1992 £12

This ambitious book focuses in the main on the botanic and environmental aspects of a fascinating area of woodland within Charnwood Forest. Much

of it is taken up with lists of plants to be found in the wood and other detailed information for the specialists in botany, ecology or woodland management.

Archaeologists and historians may wish to turn straight to chapter three, which outlines the history of the wood and its slate quarries from prehistoric times to the present, in an informative text complemented by a good selection of maps, diagrams and photographs.

This is a thoroughly researched and well presented book, much of which is rather technical for the average reader. The publishers should consider issuing an abridged edition of more immediate appeal to the woodland walker and the local historian.

J H

LEICESTER IN OLD PHOTOGRAPHS

David R Burton

Alan Sutton with Leicestershire Museums 1993 £7.99

The Alan Sutton series of books of old photographs are usually arranged under different themes. In defiance of the limitations of such a format, this author has unobtrusively made an original, individual and personal contribution to the social history of his city. The one-page introduction concedes that he cannot provide a complete picture but sets the background to his own collection of postcard views, which forms the basis of the book. Further autobiographical details emerge from the short but sharply detailed captions.

He lived in the West End from 1935 to 1958. His father worked for R Morley and Sons and he himself worked at Joseph Johnson's, Knight's the men's outfitters and Whitcher Menswear. He attended King Richard III School for Boys; so Western Park was very much 'his' park. Music, theatre and the cinema were his relaxations and sometimes swimming in the Soar at Aylestone.

Topics of general importance are touched on throughout. The final section is a grim reminder of the bomb damage to the city in the Second World War and includes an alarming German map which pinpoints Leicester targets such as railway lines and stations. The whole book, however, is held together by the author's own enthusiasm for the life of his home city, which has evidently affected in the first place his choice of the images that he has been

collecting for the last ten years.

J G

THE QUALITY OF LEICESTER

Leicester City Council Planning Department

Leicester City Council

1993 £14.95

The Quality of Leicester is a welcome and distinguished addition to works on the City of Leicester. Refreshingly it is neither a history book nor a book on local buildings. It sees, rather, Leicester dynamically as a City that has changed and continues to change both physically and socially. Awareness of the quality of our past and present underpins our attitude to future developments. The book has a strong architectural content, which the photographs successfully combine with the life and work of Leicester's different communities who live amongst and use its varied built and open spaces. The visual impact of the book is stunning. Inspired colour photography throughout is allied with high quality design and production. My only regret was the lack of an index; but at £14.95 the book is excellent value.

Y C C

THE GREEN BICYCLE MURDER

C Wendy East

Alan Sutton 1993 £12.99

What really happened to Bella Wright, a young Leicester mill-worker who was found dead beside her bicycle near Little Stretton in the summer of 1919, has never been satisfactorily resolved. The 'Green Bicycle Case' attracted wide public interest both locally and nationally at the time, with speculation still continuing nearly seventy years later.

This extremely well researched and comprehensive review by C Wendy East, a freelance researcher and writer on true crime, brings new evidence from previously closed files at the Crown Prosecution Service and other untapped documents. The reader is led through the lives of Bella Wright, the accused, Ronald Light, and their families, the fateful incident and the complexities of the trial. The additional information stimulates even more questions whilst at the same time many vital papers remain untraced. The truth may never be known.

This is an authoritative and full account which will provide an invaluable source for future historians and a fascinating case history for law students and others in the legal profession. The extent and level of the author's research is commendable but this important volume is worthy of a bibliography of considerably more detail and would have been further enhanced by references to support the text and details of the sources of specific photographs. Nevertheless this informative study is undoubtedly a major contribution to an intriguing case.

C T

ELIZABETHAN LOUGHBOROUGH

Anne Richmond

Loughborough and District

Archaeological Society

1992 £6.50

Smaller towns which had no corporation or borough status were still able to deal with town affairs by means of endowments of common property held by trustees and administered by a pair of executive officers. In Loughborough the officers were the Bridgemasters and historians of the town are fortunate in the survival of a run of their accounts from 1570 to 1597 as well as the parish registers and churchwardens' accounts.

Anne Richmond has steeped herself in the details of these records and the wills and inventories of inhabitants. She has also drawn on books of general history of Elizabethan England for background details. Her own book follows a novel course, starting with an evocation of the life of men and women in the town, working through various topics and levels of society and ending up with the Hastings family and then the monarch.

Within this overall order the text is illustrated by frequent word for word quotations from the records. The whole amounts to a vivid, but not comprehensive, account of the town in Elizabethan times. Nor is it an authoritative survey of the sources; for the nature of the original sources and the way in which they have been searched and used is not made clear. On the other hand anyone interested in bygone Loughborough will find much of interest among the wealth of these details about the town and its inhabitants and will be grateful to the officers of the local Archaeological Society who prepared this book for publication.

J G

HARBOROUGH IN CAMERA

Pam Aucott and Steph Mastoris

Alan Sutton with Leicestershire Museums 1992 £8.99

Most early topographical photographs date from after 1900, when it was easy and cheap for the amateur photographer to expose his roll film and leave the developing and printing to a professional and when the postcard view became general.

The authors give a complete account of photography in the Market Harborough area from before that time. They set the scene by describing the progress of the different early processes used. Almost all of the Victorian photographs of the area were made by no more than a dozen people; so it has been possible to research and publish their lives and careers. The text is illustrated with contemporary advertisements and two dozen of the 162 photographs chosen and ends with the rest of the photographs arranged as a tour of the town and villages.

The extra large format allows the handsome typesetting to do justice to the text and the expected high standard of reproduction to do justice to some of the impressive and sharply detailed images. The captions are informative both about the views and about the photographs themselves, often drawing attention to clues used in dating the originals, all of which are carefully ascribed to the different collections which preserve them. The whole work adds up to a serious piece of historical research and publication, far more than just another book of old photographs.

J G

ONE MAN'S WIGSTON: sixty years' recollections of everyday life in Wigston Magna

O D Lucas

**Leicestershire Museums,
Arts and Records Service**

1993 £6.95

Duncan Lucas, Chairman of Leicestershire County Council, lifelong historian and keeper of his own Wigston Museum, has drawn together his own personal memories of growing up in the village with a variety of other sources.

In the first chapter he takes the reader on a journey around the village, noting such familiar landmarks as The Bank, St Wolstan's church and the

Framework Knitter's Cottages. Frederick Street used to be known as Mill Lane, as there was 'a tremendous spring down there' used to run a little watermill which powered a factory. He also mentions South Wigston. Railway enthusiasts and military historians will enjoy reading about Wigston station at Spion Kop and the Leicestershire Regiment barracks at Glen parva.

The chapter on agricultural Wigston serves neatly to illustrate the village's close links to the soil and the farming way of life, links which remained until comparatively recently. Chapters on Wigston characters, growing up in pre-war Wigston and Wigston folklore breathe life and colour into the story with enchanting personal recollections, both of the author and of his many friends and family who have lived there.

The book is lavishly illustrated with photographs of bygone Wigston at various dates, which will doubtless jog the memory of many an older citizen and perhaps underline more forcefully than anything else how much the village has changed over the past century.

C R

DAISY CHAINS: A Packington Childhood

Laura M Cooper Packington Village History Group 1992 £2

ASFORDBY 1905-1922: Memories of a Leicestershire village

John Harold Worley Heart of Albion Press 1993 £7.95

SEAGRAVE

Stanley Hincks the author, 3 King Street, Seagrave 1993 £1

LOOKING BACK AT OLD DALBY: A collection of facts, memories and photographs

**Ann Jalland McKenna the author,
Brierydale, Old Dalby, Melton Mowbray 1992 £7.50 (£2 p & p)**

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF EARL SHILTON

**Ethel Foster Earl Shilton and District
Local History Group 1992 20p**

The five history and reminiscence books reviewed here represent a fine example of the rich variety of local publications produced in the county in less than twelve months. The potential for such publications is large; local and parish histories always deserve a place within our rural and village communities.

Each of these books has its own charms, ranging from the informal style and presentation of *Daisy Chains*, with its attractive vignettes, to the more substantial *Asfordby*, based on the memories of John Harold Worley, who lived in the village from 1905 to 1922. The author's astute observations and memory are notable; almost everything in the village is remembered and put on record. The descriptions of the buildings, the shops, entertainment and transport are just a few of the chapters in this immensely readable book.

The *Seagrave* history is a factual and detailed chronicle of the history of the village, quoting primary sources throughout. A collection of facts, memories and photographs is brought together in *Looking back at Old Dalby*, an informative and extremely enjoyable publication, with large numbers of illustrations, including a particularly fine series of school photographs from 1903. Complete with advertisements from local tradespeople, this is an enterprising publication, which deserves appeal beyond its immediate locality. Ethel Foster, in her *Childhood Memories of Earl Shilton*, recounts the village over eighty years ago, her early school years, the Sunday School treats, the anniversary and the Wake.

The seeds for these fascinating histories have been nurtured by interested villagers, community members or by local history groups. Each publication is of great interest in its own community and all are driven by the author's deep desire to preserve their local history for their local communities and for a wider audience. Local history groups in Leicestershire would benefit from reading these publications in order to help the development of their own.

H E B

OADBY IN 1891

Bernard Elliott

Oadby Local History Group 1992 £2.50

Bernard Elliott's latest Oadby booklet lacks a title page but the 'Foreward' refers to his 1983 publication *Victorian Oadby*, based on the 1881 census enumerators' returns and reviewed in our Vol 3 No 2, 1983/4, pp 39-40. He has now followed this up with an account of the village based on the 1891 returns.

The work involved in analysing the returns and setting out the information under different topics does not make for light reading. On the other hand anyone interested in the village and its families will be grateful for all the

information set out here in a narrative form under different headings and illustrated with ten old photographs.

The most significant finding about the local economy is the one stated at the beginning, the decline of the hosiery industry and the growth of the footwear trade.

J G

INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPES OF THE EAST MIDLANDS

Marilyn Palmer and Peter Neaverson

Phillimore

1992

£25

This well-researched and extensively illustrated book surveys the industrial archaeology of Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Derbyshire (except for the north western Peak District). It is partly a historical investigation into the nature, location and development of the major types of industry identified — extracting and manufacturing — and partly a guide to the evidence of these activities which remains in the East Midlands landscape today.

The first section is a detailed study of the growth of particular industries in the region and of the region's development as a manufacturing and mining base within the context of the national economy. In subsequent chapters regional case studies with detailed gazetteers guide the reader through the wealth of surviving evidence in the industrial landscape. A final section considers urban industrial archaeology in the major centres in the region, Leicester, Nottingham, Newark and Derby, and the specialized nature of the Leicestershire market towns and the Northamptonshire shoe towns.

Excellent photographs, maps and diagrams complement a text which is both authoritative and highly readable. The book performs two functions equally well, that of a scholarly survey of industrial development and that of an informative guide-book for the local historian.

H E

GETTING THE COAL: Impressions of a twentieth century mining community
Jeanne Carswell and Tracey Roberts eds

Mantle Oral History Project

1992 £6.95

A COALVILLE MINER'S STORY: Sixty Years' recollections of work
in the Leicestershire coalfield

Maurice Woodward

Alan Sutton with Leicestershire Museums

1992 £4.99

The Mantle Oral History Project has been recording interviews with members of the coal-mining community. The editors have drawn on six years of this work to stitch together a patchwork of transcribed extracts. They include no extensive introduction but rely on the people interviewed to speak for themselves. Themes covered include work, home life and leisure. The name of a speaker is printed in bold at the start of an extract; so it is possible to skip through and follow the contribution of each interviewee. It might have been helpful to include a list of the contributors with details and references to their contributions.

On being made redundant in 1982 Maurice Woodward was presented with a tankard, with which he has toasted his many friends, and a pen, with which he has written personal memoirs of his working life as a miner.

The two books complement each other to paint a strong picture of life and work in a declining industry, the one drawing on the experiences of many to generalize and the other tracing the career and opinions of one individual.

Up until the mid century the work was still on a human scale and each man, and his family, took personal responsibility for everything, including safety. If there was a casualty, work continued; for 'men worked and women mourned'. Pit ponies were another feature of the human scale of the work, with their annual holiday in the open air. Nationalisation brought, in theory at least, improvements in working hours and conditions. Mechanisation, however, changed the scale of the work. With heavier machinery team work became essential, while working conditions could sometimes be far worse. A machine could not distinguish stone from coal and the result was an atmosphere full of dangerous stone dust.

Both conclude with the union struggles and strikes during the final years of closure and the irony of the false position miners were put in, when the reward for increasing efficiency could in the end only be redundancy.

J G

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|---|------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| GRAVE MATTERS: A Walk Through Welford Road Cemetery, Leicester | | | |
| Max Wade-Mathews | Heart of Albion Press | 1992 | £2.95 |
| THE MONUMENTS OF THE CHURCH OF SAINT MARY DE CASTRO | | | |
| LEICESTER | | | |
| Max Wade-Matthews | Heart of Albion Press | 1993 | £2.95 |

Grave Matters is an interesting book for those who enjoy walking around graveyards and wonder about the lives of the people to whom the tomb belongs. It begins with a short history of the cemetery and this is followed by two amusing quotes from the Committee Minutes. The remainder of the book is a guided tour of the cemetery pointing out the tombs of the people whose lives enriched the history of the city and to a lesser extent that of the county. Each memorial listed gives a brief biography of the person buried there. The second of the two books is really a list of the memorials, both in the church and on the tombstones in the churchyard itself. Where possible a short biography of the person is also given. There is a useful index at the back listing all the names mentioned on the inscriptions that would be useful to any genealogist.

L E

| | | | |
|---|---|-------------|-----------|
| FOR THE RECORD: The story of Long Street School, Wigston | | | |
| Edna Taylor and John Robert Wignall | | | |
| | Greater Wigston Historical Society | 1992 | £2 |

When Leicestershire Record Office reopened in its new home, the former Long Street School, Wigston, we were immediately inundated with visitors. Some were old friends, some students and family historians anxious to return to work after an enforced hiatus, and some were local people who came to see what was going on. Among the latter a sub-group was discernible, comprised mainly of elderly people whose progress from the entrance door followed a distinct pattern. Instead of heading directly for the reception desk, they would linger, looking around or wandering aside into the visitors' 'rest' area; if there were two or more of them they would exclaim to each other and point to this or that. It soon became apparent that these were Old Longstrians, former pupils revisiting the haunts of their youth. As luck would have it Mrs Taylor's and Mr Wignall's book had appeared a short time before, so we already had some background and we were able to use some of the photographs they had assembled in our opening display.

The Foreword modestly describes the book as a cooperative effort by members of the Greater Wigston Historical Society, although the fluent text betrays the guiding hand of Mrs Taylor as editor. It is a book divided into two halves, each shaped by the available source materials. Long Street School was opened in 1881 by the Wigston School Board. The preceding years, the need for an additional school and its subsequent history up to the replacement of the School Board by Leicestershire County Council in 1903 are all traced from the Board's minute books. Many enlightening details are extracted, from the unsurprising fact that teachers' salaries were the heaviest item of expenditure (£587 in 1884) to the cost of cleaning the cesspools and infants' closets (4 shillings per quarter). The local detail is related to wider themes in the development of public education and, in particular, the growing range of education provided by the School Boards.

The second half of the book covers a much longer period, from 1903 to the present. During this time the nature of the schools which occupied the Long Street buildings changed several times. The Elementary School begun by the Board and continued by the County Council gave way in 1934 to a Modern School which became a Secondary School after 1944. When the latter left for new premises at Abington Fields in 1954, Long Street reverted to a junior role as the home of the National School (All Saints).

After All Saints quit the site for new premises next door in 1986 a period of dereliction followed until work began on converting the old school into a record office in 1991. All of these changes are covered with a broad brush. The authors have had the advantage of drawing on the direct memories of a number of former pupils and teachers and there are many lively insights. The character of the different schools is glimpsed in accounts of the sporting achievements of the Modern and Secondary Modern Schools and the emphasis on music and drama at All Saints. Again local changes are related to national educational landmarks such as the Hadow Report of 1926 and the Butler Act of 1944. The absence of a basis of written records for this period, however, is evident in the sketchier treatment when compared to the account of the School Board period.

The book is attractively produced with lots of illustrations, well written and very reasonably priced. It makes a fitting memorial to the 'handsome building' which, happily, still adds a note of unpretentious distinction to this end of Long Street.

C W H

RAWLINS: the first three hundred years

Don Wix and Ian Keil

Rawlins Community College, Quorn

1992

£7

150 YEARS OF BELTON SCHOOL

Liz Threadgill and Stuart Hicks

Dalton Watson Fine Books, Belton

1993

£2.95

THURMASTON SCHOOLS 1844-1993

K J Funnell the author,

Eastfield County Primary School, Thurmaston

1993

£4.95

VILLAGE SCHOOL DAYS 1874-1991

Burton-on-the-Wolds Primary School

1992

£5

Now that schools are having to justify their existence in the educational market-place, some take stock of where they have come from and commemorate their history with anniversaries and publications. The research for most of the text of these four publications was cooperative work based on documentary sources, mainly school log books, for the earlier periods and reminiscences and interviews for the more recent years.

The Woodhouse school founded by Thomas Rawlins in 1691 failed in 1864. A new charity scheme eventually saw its re-opening in 1892 as Rawlins Grammar school, in Quorn as the centre of population. In 1898 it became coeducational and in 1948 it became a Grammar School for Girls. That year Miss Marjorie E Sawdon started as headmistress and when the establishment was enlarged into the Community College in 1967 she became its first principal. The commemorative book has been expertly researched and written and includes an impressive list of acknowledgements. It is a smart and professionally produced 'perfect bound' paperback with excellent illustrations.

The Belton booklet draws on the first surviving log book for the period 1867 to 1898 and reminiscences for this century. In 1946 the school was saved from closure by a vigorous local campaign; but it did not get its new building until 1976. There is good photographic coverage of the village May Queen ceremony and maypole dancing.

The first part of the Thurmaston book is based on an academic study and makes intelligent and informed use of the log books. It was difficult to raise funds for the original National School in a poor framework-knitting village. When work was good, parents kept children away to help them; when it was bad, they could not afford 2d a week. The second half includes accounts of the experiment of using the old buiding as a teachers' centre, the Leicestershire Resources Centre.

Because of its patronage by the Packe family, Burton school was built not in the village but in an isolated position on the edge of the park of Prestwold Hall. It had to wait until 1966 for a new building in the village. Apart from the inconvenience of the old building, which was damp and sometimes flooded, exasperation shews in the log book for 1883 complaining of parents being 'in the habit of making silly and ignorant objections, more, it would seem, for the sake of annoying and hindering the teachers in the performance of their duty'.

Burton school had no electric lighting until 1948 and no telephone until 1954. Belton school had to wait until 1963 for a telephone.

J G

THE HISTORY OF LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY CRICKET CLUB

Dennis Lambert

Christopher Helm

1992 £17.99

Inevitably comparisons will be drawn with E E Snow's classic *A History of Leicestershire Cricket* of 1949 and its continuation *Leicestershire Cricket 1949 to 1977*. Snow virtually exhausted the sources in his comprehensive study of eighteenth and nineteenth century Leicestershire cricket; but despite much duplication this new work is important for bringing the history right up-to-date. Formed in 1879, the club did not achieve first class status until 1894 and spent many years struggling both financially and on the field. After the arrival of Ray Illingworth in 1969 the team finally achieved success in competition and the author devotes the final third of the book to this significant period, continuing the story into the David Gower period.

The narrative is very readable and well illustrated with photographs of the players, although a few more of the venues would have been appreciated. The text is interspersed with interesting one-page biographies of the more prominent cricketers. No cricket history would be complete without a statistical section and this one's is excellent. There are useful biographical details of all Leicestershire players (a good proportion were born in the county), as well as career and club records and match results.

Although the rather short bibliography refers to year books and periodicals, there is no mention of the newspapers, club minute books and other archives used extensively by Snow which are now in the Leicestershire Record

Office. The only major criticism of the book is that the index is limited to personal names, hindering those interested in particular places or subjects. This publication, however, is naturally designed more for the specialist cricket historian than the local historian and is very clearly written and attractively presented making it indispensable for all Leicestershire cricket enthusiasts.

A J N G

STAGE BY STAGE: sixty years of theatre in Market Harborough
Henry Arthur Jones

Market Harborough Drama Society 1993 £4.95

Market Harborough is fortunate in having a particularly active and imaginative drama society, which celebrated its sixtieth anniversary in 1993. This commemorative history contains much to interest not only past and present members of the society but also the local and cultural historian. There is much information on the unusually adventurous range of productions over the society's sixty years as well as on financial and building matters.

Amateur theatre is a unique mix of hard work, dedication and fun, and this comes through in the well presented text and photographs. Market Harborough can be proud of its drama society, whose history is ably chronicled in this attractive and entertaining book.

J H

LEICESTER CINEMAS 1910-1960

Philip Thornton the author 1992 £3

A fascinating survey of the rise and fall of the cinema in Leicester, from the earliest converted halls (the Grand, in 1910), through a peak of thirty one cinemas in 1939, to the decline in the face of television competition by the early 1980s, by when all but a few of the Leicester cinemas had closed.

The booklet is arranged in the form of a glossary of thirty two cinemas accompanied by the author's own line drawings. Where the buildings still stand the illustrations shew current appearance and usage, while those that have been demolished have been drawn from contemporary postcards and photographs. Each entry is linked to dated advertisements for film

programmes taken from the entertainments pages of the *Leicester Mercury*. The information about individual cinemas is in the form of random anecdotal snippets culled from the author's own vivid memories of many years of picture-going and from the pages of the *Leicester Mercury*.

A map and more detailed location information would have been useful to those who did not live in Leicester during the period; but for those who did this booklet will revive many memories of queuing for the latest Hollywood epic on a Saturday night.

H E

CINEMA IN LEICESTER 1896-1931

David R Williams

Heart of Albion Press

1993 £12.95

An enormously detailed and extensively illustrated survey of cinema in Leicester from the earliest times, when short 'living pictures' were shewn on manually operated projectors as part of variety bills in music halls, to the opening of the Trocadero in 1931, which the author sees as the beginning of a new phase of cinema operation — the emergence of national chains of 'super cinemas' with café, ballroom and, perhaps most significantly, car park.

Chronologically arranged, the book covers many topics of social and cultural interest within the framework of a detailed cinema history. The influence of political propaganda films, American and 'foreign' films is discussed, as is the structure and development of the film production and distribution industry in Britain and the place of film-going in the cultural life of the British people. The strict chronological arrangement of the book, however, creates a frequent anomalous juxtaposition of the minutiae of individual cinema operation with topics of wider social and political relevance.

Meticulously researched, the book must contain all the information available on the history of Leicester cinema during this period and as such is destined to become the definitive work on the subject. It is also an enjoyable and entertaining read for the local historian, the cinema historian and those who remember this early period of rapid and exciting developments in mass entertainment. It is unfortunate that the unavoidably poor quality of some of the older illustrations has not been helped by inferior reproduction and over-enthusiastic use of indifferent material.

H E

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